Teamwork Strategies

The Vision

Collaboration partners have clearly defined their roles and responsibilities and have implemented specific strategies that encourage joint decision making, involve all partners in project activities, and reward partners for their work.

Teamwork Strategies

The best method of overcoming obstacles is the team method.
—Colin Powell

Action Steps to Success

One of the most important aspects of partnerships is that individual members bring different skills, interests, and perspectives to the shared vision. While not every member of the collaboration must work on every aspect of the community policing initiative, it is critical that all partners are informed, feel included, and have a sense of ownership of the entire effort. Power, responsibility, decision making, and credit are shared in a team effort. Responsibilities must be shared among the partners to build commitment and a sense of accomplishment. Based on the expertise inventory of the partners, regular, specific, and valued responsibilities and roles should be designated equitably.

It is important to recognize that merely involving a group of individuals in an effort does not make that group a team. Equally important is an understanding that teamwork may not always seem like the most efficient means of achieving the goal, but it is likely to be the most effective.

Consider "Team" as an acronym— Together Everyone Achieves More.

Step 1

Ensure That All Partners Have a Part in Developing the Shared Vision and Common Goals.

A jointly developed shared vision that incorporates all partners' expectations for the project and that accommodates individual and organizational agendas is a good foundation for building a functional team that will collaborate to reach a common goal.

Step 2

Define Member Roles and Responsibilities.

Defining and articulating roles and responsibilities demonstrates that the collaboration has carefully planned how partners can contribute to the success of the problem-solving initiative or other community policing project. Collaborations should define the roles and responsibilities of the lead agency, partners, committee chair, meeting facilitator, and members. For each of these roles, the collaboration should define:

- What does it mean to assume one of these roles?

- What am I responsible for if I take on this role?

- How long will I have to serve in that role?

Developing a glossary of collaboration roles and responsibilities answers questions, defines relationships, and promotes individual and group accountability. Clear expectations allow members of the partnership to have the information they need to make informed decisions regarding participation. Moreover, clearly defined roles and responsibilities increase the likelihood that members will accept tasks that are reasonable and ensure that the action plan will be successfully implemented.

Step 3

Involve All Partners in Project Activities, Meetings, and Discussions.

Whenever possible, try to schedule meetings so that all partners can attend. Develop mechanisms to inform partners of meeting minutes and decisions, especially those partners who were absent from a particular meeting. Maintain open communication and share decision making through consensus. At times, core partners may be tempted to make unilateral decisions or undertake tasks without team input or assistance, especially if these partners feel that not enough progress has been made. Developing a pattern of

operating single-handedly, however, is a sure way of alienating partners and losing resources.

Step 4

Seek Commitment from Partners.

Team leaders should seek commitment from partners to participate actively as a team in the collaboration. This commitment can be gained and sustained if core partners lead the team with consistency and integrity, respect the membership's diversity without attempting to change individuals, and if core partners strive to generate equal participation and meaningful contribution by all collaboration members. Core partners who use their influence to compel other partners to participate or concede to "team" decisions may achieve compliance, but they will not generate teamwork.

Step 5

Acknowledge and Reward Team Members.

Ensure that all team members know how their individual efforts contribute to the team's effort and to the common goal. Acknowledge, credit, and support individual efforts as vital to the success of the collaborative initiative. Encourage all partners to continually share their individual contributions with the entire team.

Avoiding the Pitfalls

When developing and strengthening teamwork in a community policing collaboration, beware of the following pitfalls and consider implementing some of the suggested strategies if you have already encountered these challenges. Also, to help diagnose a struggling partnership, please refer to Section 1, Tool 1: Unsticking Stuck Groups/Reassessing the Collaboration, in particular items 17–20, to assess teamwork.

Pitfall:

Partners work independently or sometimes at cross-purposes. This lack of cohesiveness may occur when "partnerships" are formed for administrative purposes, to comply with grant requirements, or as directed by upper-level management or a political figure. Forced partnerships can produce animosity, a lack of ownership of the effort, or dysfunction.

Solutions:

The vision statement should be developed or redeveloped to allow partners to accomplish personal or organizational goals, as well as the "team" goal. To support the vision, however, partners must acknowledge interdependence and develop an action plan for achieving the vision through mutual support.

In addition to a lack of commitment to a vision, another source of teamwork breakdown may be lack of trust. Implementing some of the suggestions found in Section 3, Trust (e.g., actively listening to all partners, communicating personally rather than by mass communication, developing ground rules that support respect for and involvement of all partners, and addressing conflicts prior to their breaking point), may help rebuild the team.

Pitfall:

Turf battles slow or stop project progress. When not operating as a cohesive unit working toward a common goal, partners can be distracted by individual or organizational priorities and roles. This happens when a partner feels that his/her organization should be responsible for a certain task or activity, and may result in a refusal to share information or resources, or even in conducting activities counterproductive to the project.

Solutions:

Clearly, jointly, and equitably designate roles and responsibilities while remaining open to redistributing these roles, if that benefits the vision.

Rather than ignore conflict, address it. Refer to Tool 12: Tips on Conflict Resolution found in Section 7, Open Communication.

Pitfall:

The tone of meetings and interactions is negative, manipulative, directive, and/or secretive.

Solutions:

Use a trust-building/team-building activity such as a ropes course or facilitated exercise (see Tool 11: Let's String Along) as a springboard, moving a negative or disjointed group towards functioning as a productive team. Core partners should then review the principles of team leadership and avoid trying to control the team.

Address conflict immediately and with an open mind, viewing the conflict as an opportunity for new ideas and creativity. Refer to Tips for Conflict Management in Section 7, Open Communication.

Renew focus on team norms and ground rules. Emphasize and ensure joint decision-making processes. Open brainstorming and joint decision making are essential components to teamwork and collaborative progress.

Tools to Plan and Chart Your Progress

Tool 11

Let's String Along[7]

This is a team-building exercise that demonstrates the interdependency of the partnership.

Directions:
This exercise takes from 15 to 20 minutes and utilizes a facilitator or leader. The leader or facilitator starts by stressing that everyone depends on others. To illustrate this point, ask partners to indicate which members of the team they depend on.

The first person (the leader can start, if a facilitator is not used) is given a ball of string. S/he picks out someone whom s/he relies on, and while holding onto the end of the string, throws the ball to that person and states the nature of the dependency. The person who just received the ball holds onto the strand of string and tosses the ball to another person upon whom the second person relies. Continue this process for as long as time permits or until all partners have been involved in the "web." At the conclusion, repeat the initial point—all partners depend on or are "tied to" one another for this project to succeed.

Discussion:
Untie the group and discuss the following questions:

■ Even with the independent nature of some of the project's tasks, most of us still need others. Why?

■ How did you choose the person to whom you tossed the ball of string? Could there have been others?

■ Can you think of any situations in which we operate totally without support?

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[7]Scannell, E.E. and Newstrom, J.W. *Still More Games Trainers Play: Experiential Learning Exercises*. New York, NY: Mc-Graw Hill, Inc., 1991.

Learn More About It
Leadership Skills

Covey, S. *Principle-Centered Leadership*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1992.

> This resource provides insight into facing daily challenges by employing the concept of principle-centered leadership. It includes information on the skill of developing people and organizations. This is a tool that shows the reader how to develop personal and professional relationships. Available for purchase at: www.amazon.com.

Gardner, J.W. *On Leadership*. New York, NY: Free Press, 1993.

> Based on empirical research, this expert examines how leadership is practiced in the United States. It emphasizes creating a vision that builds on history as we look to the future. Available for purchase at: www.amazon.com.

Moore, C. M. *Group Techniques for Idea Building*. 2nd ed. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1987.

> Using a task-oriented approach, this guide helps small groups engage in idea development and explores how groups make choices. It provides comprehensive coverage of Interpretive Structural Modeling (ISM), a technique designed to help groups in the choice-making process. This is a resource for professionals in organizational behavior, management, and public administration. Available for purchase at: www.amazon.com.